



# Department Updates

December 2020

## Finance

**Jodi Busch**  
**Finance Director**

The Finance Department had a very busy fall season focusing on the 2021 budget. At the November 2nd County Board meeting, a County Budget was set at \$67,174,418 with a levy of \$22,199,961. Once the budget was approved, it was full speed ahead as the County Apportionment calculations were finalized and sent out to the municipalities and Department of Revenue. Soon after, the Levy Limit Worksheet was completed and also sent to the DOR. Next came the setup of the 2021 Departmental Budgets in our financial software system. Did you know that the County Budget is divided up between more than 1400 separate departmental accounts? As you can imagine, it takes a great deal of time throughout the budget process to enter, calculate, and check, to insure that everything ties out to what was approved. Now with just a few more tasks to complete, we will be ready for 2021.

In addition to preparing and looking ahead to the New Year, we are also looking back over 2020 to begin our year-end processes. CliftonLarsonAllen will be focusing on Barron County the week of December 14th for their annual preliminary audit. Because of Covid-19, we expect they will be working remotely. Luckily, over the past few years we have working to convert our audit work papers to electronic versions. This has really worked in our favor with the current distancing practices needed. We really didn't miss a beat when the audits needed to be conducted remotely this year.

Another project handled this year in Finance was the tracking of Covid-19 costs. Barron County was awarded over \$1.6 million in State and Federal funding to cover several areas of costs related to the pandemic. Types of costs included PPE, Quarantine and Isolation, Contact Tracing, Testing, Cleaning and Sanitizing, Telework Equipment and Employee Leave. Heidi Syvinski has taken the lead in the budgeting, tracking and reporting for the various pots of money available and has done an exceptional job in keeping everything straight. At this time it is unknown if we will be receiving additional funding in 2021, but we will continue to track costs associated with the pandemic since it doesn't appear it will be slowing down any time soon.

As we move into 2021, we will start reconciling 2020 accounts and prepare the necessary work papers. W-2's, 1095's, and 1099's will be calculated and sent out in January, and we will be assisting departments with their year-end deposits, payments, and any necessary adjusting entries through February. Late February and March will consist of closing the books County-wide, and in April we will be putting everything together for the Auditors to start their fieldwork. The whole process of closing the year and preparing for the audit takes several months to complete. The Finance Team will be working together through the winter to insure deadlines are met and all reconciliations are completed accurately.

On behalf of the Barron County Finance Department, we wish you a blessed Christmas Season and Happy New Year!

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## County Clerk

**DeeAnn Cook**  
**County Clerk**

2020 has been a most unusual and challenging year to say the least. Having elections during a pandemic created many obstacles. Typically in Barron County, we have relatively low numbers of absentee requests. Our voters tend to come to the polls and vote in person on Election Day. COVID-19 changed that. Many of the municipalities saw nearly a 50% absentee rate causing a great deal of extra work and expense. Municipalities were very creative when it came to making their polling place safe for poll workers and Election Day voters. Many purchased Plexiglas shields and made good use of the PPE that was provided by the state. Turnout for the November 3, 2020 General Election was the highest during my tenure. 25,469 votes were cast in Barron County which is approximately 92% of registered and 69% of eligible voters. At the comparable 2016 election, 22,926 votes were cast and the next highest turnout was back in 2004 when 24,189 votes were cast. All of our results were in and posted to our website prior to 11:00 PM. Thanks to Vonnie Ritchie, Jeff and Pam French and Margo Katterhagen who again volunteered their time helping take in election results. Special thanks to my deputy Jess Hodek who had to take on larger responsibilities due to my having to work remotely because of COVID. She did a fantastic job! Jess and Wendy Coleman also stepped in for County Board of Canvass and handled that beautifully as I attended virtually. Very thankful to have such great staff!

Even distribution of dog license tags is different this year. Normally, our Treasurer's office has an in person meeting late in the fall with all of the Municipal Treasurers to go over procedures, etc. and we distribute licenses for the upcoming year at that meeting. Due to COVID, there was no meeting so we are just giving a packet with the new tags to Treasurer's when they bring in their final settlement.

### UPCOMING ELECTION SCHEDULE FOR 2021:

Spring Primary Election - Tuesday, February 16 (if necessary)  
Spring Election - Tuesday, April 6

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## Register of Deeds

**Margo Katterhagen**  
**Register of Deeds**

To say that we have made some major adjustments to accommodate 2020 would be an understatement!

Since March 23rd, we have had 1 staff person working from home. Currently, we have 2 staff working from home and one of us manning the office, due to the minimal counter customers. With the ability to remote into our recording system from home, the daily documents are accessible. Along with working on the daily documents we have back indexed over 15,550 older documents, making these docs searchable in our recording system.

Our total number of recorded documents are at a decade high – through the end of November, we have recorded 10,882 documents. In 2019 we recorded 8,485 documents and in 2018 we recorded 8,157 documents. This is due to the record low mortgage interest rates.

Generally, with a large number of property owners refinancing, it slows the real estate market down....but again 2020 shows us that things are not normal! Through November, we have deposited over \$748,180 in transfer fees (\$3 per \$1,000 of the selling price) compared to \$652,773.90 in transfer fees in 2019 and \$612,415.80 in transfer fees in 2019. The real estate market in Barron County is booming!

Another increase for our office is our Vital Record applications. Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, we have printed 8,245 vital records. We did experience a slight drop in birth applications in the middle of the year due to the fact that the Federal Government extended the R.E.A.L. ID deadline to October 2021.